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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the identification of situational components and supervisory practices that lead to the development or reinforcement of a strong, positive self-concept on the part of the student teacher. Included is a brief literature review of research studies concerned with identifying various situational components involved in student teaching. The main portion of the report deals with a recent study at the University of Iowa, which concludes that in general there is no change in teachers' self-concept during the course of the student teaching experience. Three factors, however, were identified as being associated with an increase in self-concept: (a) socioeconomic status of the student teacher's classroom (heterogeneous classes produced great increases in student teacher self-concept, lower socioeconomic status some increase, and higher status a decrease); (b) college supervisor's teaching experience (student teachers who had supervisors with 5 or 6 years experience showed the greatest increase in self-concept); and (c) supervisory practice of college supervisors (student teachers whose supervisors always scheduled their observations well in advance showed a marked increase in self-concept). (JA)

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"Developing Good Teachers by Strengthening Student Teachers' Self-Concepts"

BY DIANE R. BURGY

Good teachers have a positive self-concept. They are good teachers and they know they are good teachers. This statement is axiomatic and, while difficult to prove, would appear to be one with which few educators would argue. At least several factors are involved in the development of good teachers and the building of a positive self-concept. One of these obviously is innate talent, a factor with which teacher educators can do very little. Another factor, however, relates to the education and training of the teacher, a factor with which teacher educators are intimately and extensively involved. In particular the student teaching experience is universally held to be the single most important factor in the development of a beginning teacher.

What is there in the student teaching experience that builds, strengthens, or reinforces the self-concept of the student teacher? What are the situational components in the student teaching experience itself which lead to the development of good teachers?

The situational components involved in student teaching are basically of two types. First are the human relationships components, the relationship between the college supervisor and the student teacher and the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher. The second type involves environmental factors, such as the size of the class, the socio-economic status of the students worked with, the organizational pattern in the building, and the general climate of the building in which student teaching takes place.

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Related Research

Much has been written and many research studies have been conducted regarding the various situational components involved in student teaching. In particular, attention has dwelt on the components of the supervisory behavior of the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher.

The college supervisor has been charged with too infrequent contacts[1] and inadequate supervisory performance of student teachers.[2,3] In situations where more intensive college supervisory activities were initiated, results were more favorable.[4] A study of student teachers' perceptions of effective supervision[5] revealed the effective college supervisor to be one who can adopt different behaviors at different times during the student teaching experience.

Research findings[6,7,8] indicate that the effective cooperating

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[1] John W. Stewig, "Varying Perceptions about the Ideal Student-Teaching Supervisor's Role," Dissertation Abstracts, XXXVIII (1967/68), 4518-A.

[2] Gail M. Inlow, "The College Supervisor of Student Teaching--A Comparative Study," Journal of Teacher Education, X (June, 1959), 215.

[3] Norman D. Bowers and Alice G. Scofield, "Evaluating the Supervision of Student Teachers," Journal of Teacher Education, X (December, 1959), 467.

[4] William A. Bennie, "The Cooperating Teacher Looks at Campus Life," Peabody Journal of Education, XLII (September, 1964), 106.

[5] Carolyn J. Carr, "Factors in Constructive Human Relationships between College Supervisors and Student Teachers in Selected Professional Situations," Dissertation Abstracts, XXVIII (1966/67), 1322-A.

[6] Russell L. Trimmer, "Tell Us More, Student Teacher!" Journal of Teacher Education, XII (June, 1961), 230.

[7] H. W. Schooling, "Partnership in Teacher Preparation," NEA Journal, LI (May, 1962), 61.

[8] John P. Strouse, "Is Your Halo on Straight?" Supervisors Quarterly, IV (Autumn, 1969), 33.

teacher, in the view of student teachers, exhibits these behaviors: holds regular conferences, displays a positive attitude toward the student teaching experience, shows overall helpfulness, and exerts positive influence on the student teachers' attitudes.

A recent study exploring the relationship between student teachers' expressed satisfaction with their experiences and their assessed performances yielded the following recommendations about student teaching:

> . . . diagnostic procedures are necessary to assess both the readiness of the student teacher and the appropriateness of the 'match' with the master teachers; college supervision needs to be a good deal more continuous and less desultory in order to assess the nature of the ongoing experience and make the appropriate adjustments; and the length of the internship should be flexible so that students may remain apprentices until they are seen as ready for their first independent classroom assignment.[9]

The literature of student teaching is replete with recommendations and observations similar to those expressed in the preceding paragraphs and based on the studies herein cited and others similar in nature. In an era of change in student teaching programs, teacher educators would be well advised to look to the growing body of research evidence now available in designing new programs or revising existing practices.

Student Teaching and Self-Concept

A recent study at The University of Iowa[10] examined the effect of a

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[9] Phyllis P. Shapiro and Bernard J. Shapiro, "Self and Other Directed Evaluation of Classroom Internships," Supervisors Quarterly, VI (Spring, 1971), 23.

[10] Dianne R. Burgy, "A Study of the Effect of Selected Situational Components on the Self-Concept of Student Teachers," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Iowa, 1972.

number of situational components affecting the self-concept of 133 student teachers involved in a wide variety of student teaching environments in the public schools of Eastern Iowa. Several interesting conclusions were reached about the relationship between the student teaching experience and the self-concepts of student teachers.

The first conclusion was that in general there is no change in student teachers' self-concept during the course of the student teaching experience. While this may be stated generally, it was not true in all cases among the student teachers studied. The principle of individual differences applies here as in all phases of education.

It appears from the study that if there were a general trend it would be in the direction of a decrease in the student teachers' self-concept.

Three factors or situational components were however identified as being associated with an increase in self-concept. The first of these was the socio-economic status of the class with whom the student teacher worked. Student teachers who worked with very heterogeneous classes in terms of socio-economic status experienced the greatest increase in self-concept. Those who worked with classes mainly of lower socio-economic status showed some increase in self-concept, while those who worked with classes primarily of higher socio-economic status experienced a decrease in self-concept. This finding would seem to indicate that the upper or upper-middle class suburban school is not the ideal location for student teaching to take place.

The mean scores reported on the following Table and on Tables 2 and 3 indicate positive and negative changes in self-concept scores of student teachers at the conclusion of the student teaching experience as related to specific situational components.

Table 1

Results of Analysis by Socio-Economic Status of the Class

ANOVA Summary Table

Source	df	SS	F
Groups	2	87.4675	5.62*
Within	130	1010.8934	
Total	132	1098.3609	

Group Means and Standard Deviations

Group	N	Mean	SD
Many low socio-economic with some medium and high	55	0.182	2.398
Very heterogeneous mixture	52	0.288	2.575
Many high socio-economic with some medium and low	26	-1.808	3.669

* $p < .05$

The second factor identified with a student teacher's increase in self-concept was the number of years of teaching experience of the college supervisor. Those student teachers under the guidance of supervisors who had six or more years of classroom teaching experience showed the greatest increase in self-concept. (See Table 2) Here clearly the implication is that experience counts in the selection of college supervisors of student teaching, the more experience the better.

Table 2

Results of Analysis by Number of Years Teaching Experience of the Supervisor

ANOVA Summary Table

Source	df	SS	F
Groups	3	66.0290	2.75*
Within	129	1032.3319	
Total	132	1098.3609	

Group Means and Standard Deviations

Group	N	Mean	SD
1 or 2 years	18	0.167	2.587
3-5 years	35	-1.343	3.397
6-10 years	41	0.268	2.430
More than 10 years	39	0.282	2.611

* $p < .05$

A third factor which was found to be associated with an increase in the student teachers' self-concept relates to a supervisory practice of the college supervisors. This was the factor of whether the supervisors' observations of the student teacher were scheduled or unscheduled. Student teachers whose supervisors always scheduled their observations well in advance showed a marked increase in self-concept, while those who never knew when the supervisor might appear for an observation showed a marked decrease in self-concept.

Table 3

Results of Analysis by Whether the Observations by the Supervisor Were Scheduled or Unscheduled with the Student Teacher

ANOVA Summary Table

Source	df	SS	F
Groups	2	60.5146	3.79*
Within	130	1037.8463	
Total	132	1098.3609	

Group Means and Standard Deviations

Group	N	Mean	SD
Scheduled	40	0.700	2.462
Unscheduled	46	-0.978	2.583
Some scheduled and some unscheduled	47	-0.106	3.724

* $p < .05$

A large number of other situational components and supervisory practices of both the cooperating teacher and the college supervisor were analyzed in this study. None seemed to affect the self-concepts of the student teachers in any marked degree. Included were the organizational pattern,

the size of the class, the size of the building, the number of other student teachers in the building, and the general climate of the building.

The supervisory practices of the college supervisor that had no influence on the student teachers' self-concept include such factors as the number of observations made, the duration of the observations, the frequency and type of conferences held, and the time and days (of the week) that observations were made.

The role of the cooperating teacher, while it is obviously a very important component in the total student teaching experience, also proved to have little or no influence on the self-concept of the student teacher. Among the factors which were explored relating to the cooperating teacher and which resulted in no differences in the student teachers' self-concept were the presence or absence of the cooperating teacher while the student teacher was teaching, the frequency and type of conferences held with the cooperating teacher, the age of the cooperating teacher, and the number of years of teaching experience of the cooperating teacher.

Summary and Implications

To summarize briefly, this study was concerned mainly with identifying situational components and supervisory practices which lead to the development or reinforcement of a strong, positive self-concept on the part of the student teacher. Of the numerous behaviors and components analyzed, only three factors were found to be statistically significant. The first of these was doing the student teaching in a classroom where the students' socio-economic status was a very heterogeneous mixture or in a classroom where the students come primarily from the lower socio-economic classes. The second factor was

performing the student teaching under the direction of a college supervisor who had six or more years of classroom teaching experience. The third and final factor associated with an increase in student teachers' self-concept was the scheduling of the college supervisor's observations. Student teachers who always knew when the college supervisor would be coming to observe showed an increase in self-concept.

The implications which can be drawn from this would seem to be these. Directors of student teaching programs would be well advised to avoid placing student teachers in schools or in classrooms where the student population is drawn primarily from the upper-middle or upper classes. The best type of environment for the student teaching experience takes place with a class of students representing a wide range of socio-economic classes.

Another implication is that directors of student teaching programs should seek as college supervisors teachers who have had six or more years of successful teaching experience.

Finally, the college supervisor should schedule all observations with the student teacher so the student teacher knows well in advance when the supervisor will be in the classroom to observe.

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